



**Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Department
Office of Governor Deval L. Patrick
Press Release**

Contact: Heather Nichols, Rachael Neff, Juli Hanscom – 617-725-4025; Liz Cooper (EOE) – 617-979-8351

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GOVERNOR PATRICK VISITS LAWRENCE PUBLIC SCHOOL TO CELEBRATE PROGRESS MADE UNDER STATE RECEIVERSHIP

Leahy Elementary shows sustained progress and a narrowing of achievement gaps

LAWRENCE - Tuesday, October 14, 2014 - Governor Deval Patrick today joined Secretary of Education Matthew Malone to visit the Francis M. Leahy Elementary School in Lawrence, celebrating the progress made by the students and staff at the school and throughout the district under state receivership.

"I applaud the dedication of educators and students in Lawrence on the great progress they have made in their effort to turnaround their school district," said Governor Patrick. "The Leahy Elementary School is a wonderful example of what is possible when we put student needs first and focus on making meaningful changes that will sustain themselves for years to come."

The Leahy Elementary School, which serves approximately 540 students in grades K-5, has made significant gains by taking advantage of the unprecedented autonomy available through the Lawrence Public Schools' new open architecture model, which gives individual schools the freedom to operate in the way that fits their unique, local needs. Teachers at the Leahy have more crucial planning and development time, made possible while its students enjoy increased enrichment opportunities with outside community partners. Daily sessions of small-group instruction also allow staff to target and address the specific academic needs of individual students.

"The progress we see in Lawrence is a true testament to the teachers and school leaders who stepped forward and committed themselves to making needed changes for the students they serve," said Secretary Malone. "School turnaround is some of the most difficult work happening in America today, but once again Massachusetts is proving what is possible. The Leahy School is a fine example of how dedication, focus and strategy can result in big improvements."

In November 2011, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education voted to place the Lawrence Public Schools into state receivership. In January 2012, Jeffrey C. Riley was appointed Superintendent/Receiver of the district. The district has made significant progress in turning around dismal test results and closing achievement gaps,

particularly in math. MCAS results released this fall show 41 percent of students in the district scored proficient or advanced on the math portion of the state test, compared to just 28 percent in 2011.

MCAS results released this September show the percentage of Leahy Elementary School students scoring proficient or advanced on the English portion of the test rose 6 points compared to last year. The percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced on the math test improved ten points from 2013 to 2014. The school was designated a Level 1 school this year (from Level 2), indicating it is meeting most of the targets necessary to close achievement gaps.

"I am pleased to see the progress at Leahy and in other Lawrence schools," said Elementary and Secondary Education Commissioner Mitchell Chester. "Students have benefited both from their own hard work and from better coordination among the adults in the district, who are collaborating more and holding each other to high standards."

"Education reform is working here in Lawrence, and we are proving all the skeptics wrong," said Senator Barry Finegold. "Since the school district was placed into receivership in 2011, we've had the courage to forge a partnership between the state, administrators, teachers and parents. Now, we are showing the Gateway Cities and the rest of the Commonwealth how to close the achievement gap."

"I am very happy that our children's education is on the right path towards success," said Representative Marcos Devers. "I congratulate Jeffrey Riley, and all of the educators and staff for their excellent work and progress. without their dedication and hard work this achievement would not have been possible."

"I would like to applaud the school leadership, faculty, and administration on all the hard work that it took to achieve this great success," said Representative Frank A. Moran. "It is truly worth celebrating the fact that Lawrence students are currently getting a better education today than at any point in recent history."

"We are thrilled to have Governor Patrick and Secretary Malone showcase Lawrence and the achievements of our students, teachers and staff," said Mayor Daniel Rivera. "Having 6 level 1 schools like the Leahy is a milestone for our district and a source of encouragement to keep up the hard work."

"I couldn't be prouder of the teachers, school leaders, students and families at the Leahy, and am grateful to Governor Patrick and Secretary Malone for taking the time to highlight the great work being done here," said Superintendent Riley. "Everyone at the Leahy -- and across the city -- knows there's still a lot of work ahead. But they are another great example of the exceptional things our schools can do with the right support and opportunity."

Since taking office, the Patrick Administration has had a demonstrated commitment to supporting public education throughout the Commonwealth, and the Fiscal Year 2015

budget reflects that commitment. The budget prioritized funding to school districts through Chapter 70 at a historic high of \$4.4 billion. The budget also allocated \$70.2 million – the highest level of funding in state history - for regional school transportation. The Patrick Administration also increased investments in early education including Head Start, K1 classrooms and child care services.

For more information on the Patrick Administration's strategic education goals, please visit www.ma.gov/edu.

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